
Canada's annual seal hunt has ended with only a quarter of the annual quota of seals being caught. Fishermen blame plummeting prices for seal pelts and an impending EU ban on seal products expected to come into effect in October. Lee Carter has this report from Toronto:

Many hunters from fishing communities in eastern Canada **didn't even bother taking their boats out for this year's seal hunt**. The market price for **a seal pelt** is around 12 US dollars, **a steep decline from** a peak of 100 dollars a pelt a few years ago. The seal quota had been set at 273,000, but this year those who ventured out barely took 70,000.

The depressed value of the Russian rouble and **the subsequent erosion** of one of Canada's largest markets for seal products, **is partially to blame for** the decline in numbers. China is another major customer, also **reeling from** the global recession.

But it's clear that the prospect of a European Union ban on seal products and growing international **disdain for** the hunt is becoming a major factor in its near collapse. The European parliament passed the ban in May, but it still needs the backing of EU governments. That is expected **to be a formality**.

Canadian fisheries officials admit that they **have an uphill battle** in what has become an emotional international debate. Animal rights groups have successfully campaigned for decades against the seal hunt. The annual kill has been **a source of critical seasonal income** for fishing communities already hit hard by dwindling fish stocks. But some here are wondering if this could be the beginning of the end for the centuries-old practice.

Lee Carter, BBC News, Toronto

Vocabulary and definitions

didn't even bother taking their boats out for this year's seal hunt	here, decided not to hunt seals during this year's hunting season because they didn't feel they would make enough money for it to be worth the effort
a seal pelt	a dead seal's skin
a steep decline from	much less than
the subsequent erosion	the slow reduction that is a result of the devaluation of the Russian currency
is partially to blame for	is one of the reasons for (something negative)
reeling from	here, suffering from and acting in a confused, unreliable way because of
disdain for	extreme contempt and/or disgust for
to be a formality	here, to be given almost automatically, without any serious discussion or opposition
have an uphill battle	struggle against very unfavourable circumstances
a source of critical seasonal income	what provided essential money that could only be earned during the hunting season, not all year round

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